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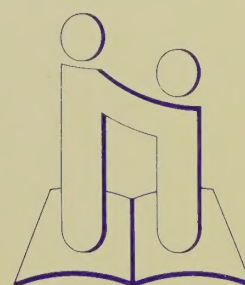
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SERVING TODAY—BUILDING TOMORROW

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MAR 1994

GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS



**THE BOARD OF EDUCATION
FOR THE CITY OF HAMILTON**

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Public Relations Plan

1994 - 1997



**THE BOARD OF EDUCATION
FOR THE CITY OF HAMILTON**

LE CONSEIL DE L'ÉDUCATION DE LA VILLE DE HAMILTON

"Serving Today - Building Tomorrow"

APPROVED
November 1993

CONTENTS

Evaluation of Strengths and Challenges.....	1 - 9
--	--------------

Audiences	10
------------------------	-----------

(Goals, Programs and Timeframes)

Parents	10
---------------	----

Employees	14
-----------------	----

General Public.....	17
---------------------	----

Business/Service Organizations/Government.....	20
--	----

New Residents/ESL Groups.....	21
-------------------------------	----

Media.....	22
------------	----

Other.....	23
------------	----

Executive Summary - Programs 1994-1997	24
---	-----------

Appendix 1 - Recommendations to Board	25
--	-----------

EVALUATION

Parents

Primary Strengths:

- there are strong Home and School Associations with representation in 28 elementary and secondary schools. Schools benefit from parent involvement with curriculum enrichment activities and special school projects. Some of these parent organizations help schools with parent information nights and work with parents and newcomers to the school community.
- Board Research Department surveys with Hamilton Board of Education parents conducted in 1988 and subsequent school-level surveys from 1991 to August, 1992, revealed that:
 - the vast majority (71-78%) of parents were satisfied with Hamilton Board of Education schools (surveys - September 1988, May 1991, August 1991, August 1992);
 - teachers and the quality of school facilities were cited as the most important factor in parents' choice of Hamilton Board of Education schools (1988);
 - the vast majority of parents would recommend Hamilton public schools for their quality education and excellent staff.

Challenges:

- no data exists on the number of schools which have parent information/ involvement strategies and the nature of these programs at the classroom and school levels.
- no central data exists on the effectiveness of current parent information programs in providing parents with basic information about what is taught in the classroom and ways to support learning at home.
- parent groups, provincially, and local parent representatives, stress the need for better communication on:
 - standards for student achievement;
 - student achievement levels;
 - how students are evaluated;
 - Board's priorities and standards for student achievement and instruction at all grade levels.
- elementary and secondary school newsletters, while providing information about school events, contain little information about what is taught in the classroom.

- Board information, as reflected in stakeholder interviews, has not provided parents with a clear cut understanding of:
 - how the Board operates
 - what programs and services are available for children
 - how to address questions or concerns
 - what information is available and how to access it
 - teaching standards and staff accountability
 - what schools teach
 - why schools use particular teaching methods
 - how schools are measuring student success.
- parent groups consistently express concern about the public system's success in teaching students basic skills and the preparedness of graduates to succeed at higher education levels and in the world of work. Parent groups want clear information on student achievement in basic skill areas. Parents also need one-to-one communication in order to clarify these issues and address questions and concerns.
- secondary school staff highlight the challenge of communication with parents, given: the difficulty of sending material with students, and limited resources for mailing. Staff members emphasize the need for increased parent involvement at the secondary level as critical to student success. Research (Ziegler - Toronto Board of Education, 1987) also suggests that teachers of older children involve parents less frequently.
- stakeholders believe the value of team effort, such as open and honest communication and co-operation in support of student learning between parents, staff and students, needs to be reinforced with both external and internal audiences.
- many parents need to be encouraged to approach teachers with questions about their child's progress in school. Research (Ziegler, Toronto Board of Education, 1987) shows that schools must invite this kind of parent involvement through face-to-face, two-way communication.
- teachers are a key source of information for parents on both the quality of education in schools and about the instructional program (Research Department Survey, 1988). Yet teachers feel they need better, more timely, and ready-to-use parent information materials about school programs and services; standards for student learning; school discipline standards and anti-violence programs; language and math programs; and new education topics, such as destreaming.
- more information needs to be available for parents whose first language is not English or French. School needs for translated materials have not been formally identified (see New Residents/ESL Groups section).
- parent groups have expressed strong interest in increased involvement in the decision-making process and have requested more opportunities to consult

on system priorities and directions at all levels of the Board's operation, particularly instructional programs, student achievement standards, special services, etc.

- parent groups express strong interest in more face-to-face communication with Board personnel, who can respond directly to questions and concerns about emerging issues and education topics.

Employees

Strengths:

- school staff are cited by parents as the most important factor in their choice of Hamilton Board of Education schools. In a Board Research Department survey conducted in 1988, the vast majority of parents (78%) were satisfied and would recommend (80%) Hamilton Board of Education schools because of their excellent staff.
- employees, teaching excellence and learning materials (curriculum) produced by Board staff were cited by the vast majority of stakeholder groups as the key strengths of the Hamilton Board of Education.
- the majority of employees felt their effort, dedication and commitment were recognized and valued in the school/department where they work.

Challenges:

- less than one-third of staff surveyed in a Board Research Department survey (1987) felt they were recognized and valued at the system level. Stakeholder interviews indicated many employee groups continue to feel undervalued for their commitment, service and support of learners and the system.
- some employee groups express concern about being cut off from regular communication channels at the school level and about the lack of communication (one-to-one) of new initiatives/decisions to all staff groups at the site-based level.
- many employee groups feel that communication between administration and department or school-level staff needs to be formalized and improved. Specifically staff believe that they need:
 - more timely and honest information about Board decisions, priorities, new directions or changes to staff or procedures;
 - more opportunities for personal contact and face-to-face communication with senior officials and trustees to discuss issues and changing priorities and to provide input on student needs, instructional programs, resource management, etc.

- Board employees have been cited by parents as key sources of information about Hamilton Board of Education schools and the quality of educational programs. Yet many employees believe they are not well enough informed. They need regular and timely information on system-level decisions, student achievement levels, resource management, new instructional programs, special services, Board directions and initiatives. School staff request more timely, ready-to-use information materials to allow them to respond more quickly to parent information needs in an informed and responsible manner.
- no ready-to-use collection of facts and figures exists in many of the areas cited above regarding student achievement and standards. Also there is no central listing of parent information resources/brochures, etc., available to school staff and parents.
- employees express a strong interest in improved use of PROFS to communicate essential information to all sites quickly and effectively.
- no regular or systematic communication program exists for all Board employees (e.g., a Board employee newsletter, regular face-to-face employee input sessions, etc.). While departments, federations and other groups regularly produce newsletters, they are narrowly focussed on issues particular to that employee group.
- employee groups express the need for an updated system directory.
- employees feel public awareness needs to be increased about student and staff achievements, and innovations in teaching strategies.
- employees need more information about the Board's vision and current and long-range priorities for human resources management and for student learning. They also want opportunities to provide input on these priorities and directions.
- there is no formal plan for recognition and communication of staff excellence in education delivery, and organizational and resource management improvements.
- team effort between employees and between staff, students and parents needs to be reinforced with internal audiences.
- stakeholder groups believe that employees require not only improved information resources but skill enrichment in communication with parents, community and media. Specifically, school staff require assistance in developing effective two-way communication programs with parents and the community.

General Public

Strengths:

- a 1988 System Public Relations Committee survey revealed that: the majority of public school supporters thought that the schools of the Hamilton Board of Education were doing a better job today than when they attended school.
- a 1989 System Public Relations Committee survey revealed that: the majority of Hamilton residents who were aware of Education Week (44%) believed Education Week activities had made them more aware of what was going on in Hamilton Board of Education schools.
- a 1991 System Public Relations Evaluation Committee taxpayer survey revealed that: taxpayers had a favourable overall impression of Hamilton Board of Education public school education; it was a good value; and that the Board and its trustees were doing a good job with regard to the way tax dollars were spent.

Challenges:

- as reflected through the media, the general public is demanding more information about the management of fiscal resources, level of student achievement, student employability skills, student mastery of basic skills, school discipline, anti-violence teaching, expectations for student learning, etc. Without solid data, public confidence in the quality of education and the public system decreases.
- a Board Research Department survey (1991) suggests that the majority of taxpayers would prefer to receive information on education *costs* through tax bill inserts. Currently, the majority of taxpayers receive information on school taxes through newspaper articles.
- a Board Research Department survey (1991) reflects that the majority (75%) of taxpayers prefer to obtain information on education *issues* in newspaper articles. The next preferred sources for information on education issues were, in order, TV News, direct contact with teachers and radio talk shows.
- According to a Research Department survey (1991), the majority of taxpayers were unaware that provincial government funding of education had decreased from 80% to almost 25%.
- the majority of taxpayers are not getting enough information about what is going on with education in Hamilton Board of Education schools (Research Department Survey, 1991).
- stakeholder groups constantly report that they do not believe the Board is regularly and systematically profiling student and staff accomplishments, nor

providing information on Board achievements, learning standards, special programs, fiscal management priorities, discipline, anti-violence programs, operation procedures, graduate skill levels, etc.

- according to Stats Canada figures, over 35% of families in Hamilton do not have children in the school system. Stakeholder groups believe the gap is widening between taxpayers' own school experience and the realities of school today. Members of the public need more direct contact with schools and the opportunity to hear from education officials about the "real" challenges and accomplishments of public education.
- current Board communication programs for the general public (including "Back to School" Guide) do not include information on the issues cited above, nor do they present the challenges facing the Board in a clear fashion.
- information contained in the Director's Annual Report is not widely circulated to the general public, parent, volunteer, business, or service organization audiences. The mission of the Board, its priorities and its progress in achieving goals are not regularly or systematically communicated to general public or parent audiences.

Business/Service Organizations/Government

Strengths:

- Hamilton's Industry Education Council was the first of its kind in Canada. Hamilton Board of Education staff have been active participants in this association, which promotes partnerships between business and education to benefit child and adult learners. Programs include mentoring, twinning between business and schools, and programs in the workplace.
- more than 1,700 Hamilton Board of Education students participate in co-op education placements in Hamilton-area businesses. The Board's Co-op Education department has launched a newsletter to improve communication with these important education partners.
- the Board and its students greatly benefit from generously funded service organization projects that improve learning opportunities for students and their families (example, Rotary Club's sponsorship of programs for inner-city children).
- in addition, schools regularly benefit from donations from service organizations to support special projects.
- the Hamilton Board of Education Foundation and schools receive financial contributions from business and service organizations in the form of bursaries and awards to support learners.

Challenges:

- business leaders, and the Chamber of Commerce for example, have expressed a strong interest in more regular and informal opportunities to provide input on: the Board's priorities; resource management; student and staff achievement and expectations; and instructional program standards.
- there is no formal communication program with business, service organizations or government bodies to provide information on Board programs, services, resource management or changing priorities for student achievement, staff performance, instructional programs and co-op education needs.
- there is no system-wide formal recognition of business and service organization leaders who provide continued and outstanding support for learners and educational programs.
- business leaders at the provincial and local levels have expressed the need for better information about: standards for student achievement, and the ability of graduates to meet the demands of the workplace and higher education. Business leaders believe that education standards are critical to Canada's ability to compete internationally.
- business leaders have expressed a strong interest in more opportunities for active involvement and participation at the school level.
- there is a need to encourage and welcome business involvement in education given the increasing levels of knowledge, attitudes and skills required for the majority of jobs in a high-tech, knowledge-extensive workplace. We need a strong business/education partnership to identify critical learning outcomes and skills to support student learning.
- there is a need for increased one-to-one contact with local government leaders to provide information about Board and public education priorities, challenges and decisions. Also, local government leaders require ongoing information about student learning standards and achievements, Board decisions and priorities, new initiatives, programs and services.

New Residents/ESL Groups

Demographic Trends

(Information from Statistics Canada Census 1988 and 1991)

- 15% of Canadian immigrants make their home in Hamilton.
- almost 1 in 5 Hamilton residents speaks neither of Canada's official languages

as their first language (national average is 13%).

- 47 languages are spoken in the area.
- top five fastest growing non-official languages are:
 - Arabic
 - Spanish
 - Chinese
 - Punjabi
 - Vietnamese
- the population of Hamilton will grow in the 1990's due to assumed high levels of international immigration and; high rate of birth (Greater Hamilton Population Trends and Projections, Planning and Development Department, Regional Planning Service, 1993).
- stakeholder groups have identified a need for better parent information materials and communication programs for parents who speak neither official language as their first language. Staff have noted the need for translated materials and effective strategies for stimulating parent involvement.
- the Board does not provide targeted information packages for services like "Welcome House", newcomers clubs and real estate agents that would provide an overview of school programs, facilities, services, information resources, and answer basic questions from new parents.

Media

Strengths:

- City-wide newspaper coverage of student and school activities, Board meeting issues and news related items is extensive. Stakeholder groups interviewed feel that newspaper coverage is, in general, fair.

Challenges:

- stakeholder groups believe the Board is not providing media with enough information on student and staff achievements, quality of education programs, teaching strategies, instructional program content, student learning standards, innovation in education, partnership programs, funding and budgetary issues, etc.
- electronic media coverage of Hamilton Board of Education schools is generally news and events driven. However, a Research Department survey (1991) reveals that TV is the second preferred source for education issue information. Radio and TV media do not regularly cover Board meetings.

- the Board has not actively pursued education issue-related feature coverage with TV and radio (for example, programs or a series on student learning standards and achievements, innovative learning methods, explanation of new initiatives such as Common Curriculum, ways parents can support learning, etc.).
- Media are increasingly shifting focus to community "grassroots" coverage of education issues. The Board has not regularly identified school-level information sources or story possibilities in conjunction with emerging education issues or decisions.
- despite widespread and growing public and parent interest in education, media outlets have fewer reporters to cover education-related news and events.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Challenges:

- graphic standards of Board Public Relations materials are inconsistent and generally do not reflect a progressive or visually appealing design.
- stakeholders generally reflected frustration with historical delays in action on public relations' initiatives. System Public Relations Committee's minutes for 1991, reinforce that an extensive committee structure for Public Relations' activities was "outmoded" and had resulted in "too many ideas without action".
- there is no system-wide co-ordination and training of school-level Public Relations representatives.
- System Public Relations Committee (1991) reflected a strong need for a Public Relations plan and policy.



AUDIENCES

Parents

Goals:

- to increase parent involvement as partners in student learning.
- to better inform all parents about student learning standards, priorities, programs, services, procedures, information resources and student and staff achievement.
- to identify effective home/school communication and provide leadership in establishing effective home/school communication.
- to improve two-way communication with parents.

Programs:

Parent Fact Sheets: Working with the Program Department, principals' associations, Home and School Associations and teachers' federations, the Public Relations Department will develop parent fact sheets that address critical parent information needs. These new fact sheets will provide information on topics, such as: programs, special services, standards for student achievement, new education initiatives, how to evaluate report cards, etc. Fact Sheets will be written in plain language with a consistent design and strong visual elements for readability. Fact Sheets will contain ideas for ways parents can support learning. Master copies will be sent to schools for easy, low-cost reproduction and distribution. Previously popular information brochures, including: Does your child need Special Education?; Whom

"The evidence suggests that no other single focus has the potential to be as productive for students than the closer linking of home and school, of parents and teachers."

[Suzanne Ziegler, Toronto Board of Education, 1987, "The Effects of Parent Involvement on Children's Achievement: The Significance of Home/School Links (an overview of research 1966 to 1987)]

"Children of parents who are aware of what their offspring are studying at school and who are in regular communication with their teachers, continue to score higher school achievement all the way through secondary school."

(Ziegler, Toronto Board of Education, 1987)

do I see? What do I say?; Welcome to our School; will be updated to be included in this series.

Timeframe:

Year 1 - develop 6 issues

- establish fact sheet topics in consultation with groups mentioned above

Year 2 - develop 6 to 8 issues

Year 3 - develop 6 new issues

- update previous issues as required
- survey parent and school stakeholder groups on effectiveness of sheets and future needs

Information Resources Listing: The Public Relations Department will contact central Board departments and schools to inventory brochures available to parents and the public. These information resources will be catalogued and circulated to schools, Home and School and other parent associations to improve parent access to information resources. This listing will be updated annually. Through this process, the Public Relations Department will also identify information brochures that require updating or may be combined with new Parent Fact Sheets or the Board Information Package (see General Public section).

Timeframe:

Year 1 - catalogue of resources, identification of brochures requiring updates

- creation of listing

Year 2 - updating of listing

Year 3 - updating of listing

- evaluate brochures for updating of information

Hamilton Board Information Package: (Please see General Public section of this Plan for more details.)

Information Line: The Public Relations Department Information Line will be promoted with parents through Board publications (elementary/secondary calendar) and parent groups. Use of the Information Line will provide parents with assistance in identifying Board staff to address concerns and information resources.

Timeframe:

Year 0 - preliminary promotion of Information Line (through elementary and secondary calendars)

Year 1 - promote Information Line in Board and school publications

Year 2 - evaluate effectiveness of line by informal survey of past callers

- improve answering procedures or promotion of line, as required

Year 3 - continued promotion of Information Line

Elementary/Secondary Parent Calendar: The Public Relations Department will develop elementary and secondary calendars that will provide parents with essential information and encourage active participation in their child's education. In addition to school calendar dates, topics addressed will include: strategies to support student learning, ways to address concerns, overview of available services and information resources, explanation of programs and student achievement standards. The calendar will be distributed through regular August mailings (secondary) and as take-home material for elementary children. Both calendars will be developed with input from Home and School, teachers' federations, principals' associations and the Program Department.

Timeframe:

Year 0 - develop editorial content and concept

- evaluate editorial content with stakeholders
- implement and distribute in August (secondary) and September (elementary)
- encourage parent feedback for evaluation and review

Year 1, 2 and 3 - same as above

Parent Conference: Based on input from Home and School Associations, teachers' federations and principals' associations, the Public Relations Department will develop an annual parent conference. The conference will feature an outside keynote speaker and workshops delivered by Board staff on topics targeted to meet parent information needs and interests. Two or three area mini-conferences will be held in the weeks following, using materials and Board speakers from the main conference program. This will allow the Board to match speakers with specific area communication needs. In Year 2 and 3 of the conference, a partnership with a neighbouring board will be pursued to expand the audience for the conference and to make it a cost-recovery event.

Timeframe:

Year 1 - research and development of content and workshops

- implement Parent Conference November '94
- evaluation by conference attendees

Year 2 - establish partnership with neighbouring board

- develop conference format and content
- implement the Conference in November '95
- evaluate profitability and attendance feedback

Year 3 - same as Year 2

Public Service Announcements: During Education Week (May), the Board will run education-focussed public service announcements on local radio. These radio spots will feature students and staff highlighting important educational issues and ways parents can work together with schools to support student success. One corporate/business partnership will be pursued.

Timeframe:

Year 1 - development of radio script

- identification of radio readers from amongst Board staff
- implementation of spots
- evaluation of spots with Home and School and teacher/principal federations and associations

Year 2 and 3 - same as above

Parent Communication Audit: In co-operation with the Research Department, principals' associations, Home and School Associations and teacher federations, the Public Relations Department will develop a survey for Hamilton Board of Education parents to assess factors such as: parent satisfaction with current communication programs at the Board and school levels, preferred channels for communication, information needs, etc. Findings of this audit will be reported to Operations and Finance with recommendations for follow-up. Data will be used to improve parent communication programs at the school and system levels. Parent information programs included in the Public Relations Plan will be reviewed and revised consistent with Board approved recommendations.

Timeframe:

Year 1 - development of audit

- implementation of audit
- preparation of results
- presentation to the Board

Year 2 and 3 - revisions to Public Relations Plan as required

- implementation of audit recommendations

Staff Workshops: The Public Relations Officer will work with appropriate Program Department, school staff and parent organizations to develop a staff Workshop that will enhance school/home communication programs. Data from the Parent Communication Strategies Review (described below) will be used to present innovative and effective parent communication and involvement strategies to staff as well as the basics of creating a welcoming school. (See Employees section for more details on Workshops.)

Parent Communication Strategies Review: Working with the principals' associations and teachers' federations, the Public Relations Officer will review and collect examples of effective and innovative parent communication strategies at the school and classroom levels, across the system. The Public Relations Officer will also survey other boards of education for examples of benchmark parent communication/involvement strategies, in Canada and the United States. A collection of these strategies will be made available to schools (elementary and secondary) in a resource manual and will form the basis of material for Staff Workshops. Opportunities will be pursued for distribution/sale of this material to other boards.

Timeframe:

Year 1 - survey of system and outside boards for material and strategies

Year 2 - summary of strategies in resource manual for schools

- inclusion of strategies in Staff Workshops

Year 3 - pursue opportunities for sale of material to other boards

Recognition Program: Recognition of parent volunteer contributions to schools, staff and students will be considered as part of the Recognition Program. (See Employee section.)

Employees

Goals:

- to broadly recognize employees who reach the highest standards in education delivery, organizational management and service for the benefit of students.
- to inform board employees regarding Board directions, goals and priorities in an open, timely and consistent manner.
- to formalize communication channels for the benefit of staff and students.
- to increase communication with employees to improve decision-making and improve team effort in the achievement of the Board's mission and goals.
- to provide employees with increased support in communication with external audiences.

Programs:

From the Director: The Public Relations Department will continue to provide support to the Director in the production and distribution of "From the Director" staff bulletins, providing employees with timely and important information on Board policies, new programs and initiatives, directions etc.

Timeframe:

Year 0 - development of bulletin design

Year 1 to 3 - ongoing production and distribution

- evaluation, concurrent with Communication Channel
Standardization re distribution methods

Staff Workshops: In-service sessions will be planned, providing school leaders with skills and strategies for building: School-Level Public Relations Plans; and Effective Parent Communication and Involvement Programs. These workshops will be developed using input from the Parent Communication Strategies Review and the Parent Communication Audit (see Parents Section).

Timeframe:

- Year 1 - develop and implement School-Level Public Relations Plan Workshop and presentation schedule
- evaluation by attendees
- Year 2 and 3 - develop and implement Effective Parent Communication and Involvement Workshop
- evaluation by attendees and ongoing revision

Hamilton Board Information Package: The Public Relations Department will develop a series of materials that can be used by all staff members to explain Board programs, services, policies, operations and enrolment procedures to external publics. (Please see General Public section for more detail.)

Recognition Program: The Public Relations Department will continue to provide support to the Director and Chairman in co-ordination of the Outstanding Achievement Certificate program and student performances at Board.

The Public Relations Department will also co-ordinate a **Quality Leaders Recognition Program**.

- A recognition program team will be formed with a 5-month timeframe for developing a Hamilton Board of Education Quality Leaders program.
- Team members from a variety of employee groups will be selected by the Director, Superintendent of Human Resources and Public Relations Officer to represent a cross-section of talents and skills across the organization.
- Team members will brainstorm ideas and procedures for meaningful and cost-effective programs to recognize:
 - outstanding employees,
 - education leaders,
 - individuals who have made a significant contribution to cost-efficiency or organizational improvement, and
 - education supporters in the community (including co-op employers, business, service groups and parent and general public volunteers).

This program will encourage a dedication to quality and excellence in the provision of educational programs and services at all levels of the organization, as well as highlight excellence within our system to outside audiences.

Timeframe:

- Year 1 - selection of team members
- development of program
- report to Board for decision/information in November, 1994
- Year 2 and 3 - implementation of Board recommendations

Quickfinder: An easy-to-use system directory will be developed by the Public Relations Department. This Quickfinder will include a complete listing of senior officials, area office staff, department staff, alphabetical listing of department staff, trustee and Board meeting details, school calendar, elementary and secondary schools, system statistics, federation and union offices, etc. Copies will be distributed to all sites and selected external audiences.

Timeframe:

Year 0 - develop design concept

- collect data
- produce Quickfinder (circulated to system, October 1993)

Year 1 - evaluate format with random sampling of staff members

- revise format only as required
- update information
- produce

Year 2 and 3 - update and produce

PROFS/Communication Channel Standardization: The Public Relations Department will promote regular use of the PROFS system for information releases to all levels of Board personnel, and identify required improvements to regular information channels to all employee groups. Current procedures for PROFS communication and circulation of bulletins and employee information to staff will be reviewed with senior management, principals' associations and department managers to determine possible improvements to: the timing of information releases, format, frequency, labelling of releases, distribution problems and to reinforce the need for regular review of PROFS messages and staff bulletins. It is expected that the PROFS system can become an effective and efficient communication channel to all Board sites and personnel. Procedures for the circulation of employee information through PROFS and distribution of printed information releases will be reviewed and standardized in co-operation with the Superintendent of Administrative Services.

Timeframe:

Year 1 - evaluation of current effectiveness of hard copy and electronic distribution channels with input from stakeholder groups listed above

- presentation of suggested standardized information distribution procedures to senior management, principals' associations and department managers for input
- revision of suggested information distribution procedures based on input
- implementation of standardized procedures for information release through PROFS and hard copy bulletins

Year 2 - evaluation of Year 1 implementation

- revisions to procedures as warranted
- implementation of revised standards

Year 3 - evaluation of procedures effectiveness with random sampling of Board employees

Newsline: The Public Relations Department will develop an employee newsletter called Newsline. It is intended that the publication will be an important source of information for all employees on Board directions, staff achievements, educational issues, education-related news, etc. The newsletter will be circulated to all staff members. Newsline is intended to provide a system-wide, shared perspective and will be designed to enhance and complement the effectiveness of department, federation and union newsletters.

Timeframe:

Year 0 - development of prototype issue

- evaluation based on feedback

Year 1 - ongoing revision of story presentation

- production of 4 to 5 issues

- evaluation of newsletter material by representatives of employee groups

Year 2 and 3 - repeat Year 1

General Public

Goals:

- to increase community understanding and support for the Board's mission and goals in the education of children and adult learners.
- to increase community understanding of Board priorities, programs, learning standards, challenges, strengths, achievements, funding and fiscal management.
- to increase utilization and effectiveness of electronic media and face-to-face communication in providing the general public with information on education today.
- to encourage "a caring attitude" in response to and in interaction with members of the public.

Programs:

Information Line: The Public Relations Officer will ensure increased emphasis on standard approaches and follow-up to public enquires by Public Relations Department staff. (Please see description under Parents Section.)

Director's Annual Report: The Public Relations Department will continue to provide support in the co-ordination, design and production of the Director's

Annual Report. The Report will highlight board accomplishments in the areas of: program development, implementation and review; the management of fiscal resources; partnerships with parent, business and community groups; human resource management; operations; policies and decisions; and facilities maintenance and operation. Special attention will be focussed on student achievement; and staff excellence and innovation in meeting student needs. And statistics about the system will be included.

A special **Business Supplement of the Director's Annual Report** (see Business section) and a **condensed version** of the Report for print media, will be developed to increase reach with general public and parent audiences. Community newspapers will be a target for this condensed version. Prepared copy promoting availability of the Report to any interested parent or parent group will be sent to schools for inclusion in school newsletters. Copies of the Report will be made available to libraries, churches, local government and service clubs. And the Report and data contained in the Report will be made available to Board officials for speeches to outside organizations.

Timeframe:

- Year 1 - development of Report and special supplements concepts
 - assistance with co-ordination of Report
 - distribution
- Year 2 and 3 - evaluation and revision of format based on feedback
 - development and distribution, same as above

Education Week: As in past years, the Public Relations Officer will play a leadership role in the co-ordination of Education Week. An Education Week Committee composed of area representatives will work together to set the theme and system-wide activities, displays and special kick-off events for the system. Area representatives will, in turn, provide leadership for school-level Education Week representatives and area mall displays. Through Recognition Program planning (see Employees Section), it is hoped that recognition of education partners, such as business and school volunteers can be incorporated into the Week's activities.

Timeframe:

- Year 1, 2 and 3 - evaluation of previous year's Education Week
 - development of Education Week themes and activities by Committee (early January)
 - implementation (in May of each year)

Hamilton Board Information Package: The Public Relations Department will develop a comprehensive Information Package with a unified design to highlight Board programs, services, policies and operations. Using some existing material, the package will include the Board Quickfinder as well as information sheets/brochures, such as:

- School Registration Procedures (elementary and secondary)
- Facts and Figures on the Board
- Kindergarten Programs
- Special Education (and SEAC)
- Continuing Education Programs
- Transportation
- Discipline (Behaviour Codes) in Schools
- How to Address Concerns
- How the Board Operates (how to offer input on Board decisions)
- School Access and Tax Support
- Elementary/Secondary Programs
- System Map
- and others

This package will fit into a newly designed Board presentation folder which will be used in conjunction with parent fact sheets (see Parents Section). This package will assist schools in welcoming new parents. The complete package, or particular fact sheets/brochures will be provided to schools and departments as requested.

Timeframe:

Year 1 - identification of available materials

- development of information
- design and production of brochures/information sheets
- circulation of sample copies to schools for ordering

Year 2 - continued design and production of information sheets/brochures

Year 3 - evaluation/revision/updating of materials as required

Media Releases: The Public Relations Department will continue to produce information releases on Board decisions, events, general news items and policy changes. Increased emphasis will be given to information on student and staff achievements to increase recognition and coverage of these items. The Public Relations Officer will also work with school and system leaders to identify school-based events and programs that provide localized angles on education issues/trends and highlight excellence within our system.

Timeframe:

- Ongoing throughout the year.

Budget Communications Strategy: The Public Relations Department will work with the Finance Department to review current Budget communication materials and develop a streamlined budget communication program targeting key internal and external audiences. Budget communication programs may include:

- budget meeting schedules and updates
- Budget highlight fact sheet
- improved tax bill insert material
- budget information releases/articles for general media and business (e.g., Chamber of Commerce magazine)

Timeframe:

- Year 1 - review of current budget communication materials
 - development of communications program
 - implementation of selected materials
- Year 2 - full implementation of communication programs
 - ongoing evaluation/revision
- Year 3 - implementation/evaluation

Business/Service Organizations/Government

Goals:

- to improve understanding of education today and Board priorities related to: learning standards, fiscal management, programs, services, and student and staff achievement.
- to establish two-way communication channels and benefit from the input of business and service organization leaders in delivery of education programs.
- to encourage and show our appreciation to business employers, service organizations, and individuals who support particular education initiatives, education programs and students.

Programs:

Special Business Supplement (Director's Annual Report): This special condensed version of the Director's Annual Report will be targeted for business audiences and will be published in a business magazine (e.g. the Chamber of Commerce magazine). The Special Business Supplement will focus on issues important to business, local government and service organization readers,

including: business/education partnerships; programs that increase student employability skills; student achievements; standards for student achievement; program development; and fiscal management.

Timeframe:

Year 1- development of format and design

- production of supplement
- publication of supplement (February)
- evaluation and revision of supplement concept

Year 2 and 3- same as above

Newsline: The Board's employee newsletter, Newsline (as described in the Employees section) will be distributed, as appropriate, to select business, service organizations and local government to keep these leaders informed about Board accomplishments and highlights of staff and student achievements.

Timeframe:

Year 1 - creation (updating) of distribution list

- distribution of Newsline (5 times yearly)

Year 2 and 3- same as above

Speeches Program/Input Sessions: In addition to the Board's Speaker's Bureau, the Public Relations Department will assist in active identification and support of speaking engagements for Board officials with business, parent and service organizations. Informal input/discussion sessions will be conducted as part of these speaking engagements.

Timeframe:

Year 1 - identification of possible speaking opportunities

- assistance to officials in preparation of speech materials

Year 2 and 3 -- same as above

New Residents/ESL Groups

Goals:

- to improve information for English-As-A-Second Language (ESL) parents and increase their involvement as partners in the learning process.
- to better inform newcomers about the strengths of public schools, and to answer questions concerning enrolment procedures, etc.

Programs:

Communication Needs Review: The Public Relations Officer will work with the English-As-A-Second-Language Co-ordinator and the Equity Co-ordinator, to determine system needs for translated materials targeted for ESL parents. Appropriate materials will be developed using selected translated materials from area schools that explain school programs, services, operations and procedures for enrolment. These materials will be designed in the form of fact sheets (similar to the Parent Fact Sheets described in the Parents Section) to allow schools to photocopy materials, as needed. Provincial government translation services will be explored.

Timeframe:

Year 1 - review of current and required resources in co-operation with ESL and Equity co-ordinators

- development of materials requirements
- development and translation of materials
- ongoing evaluation and revision based on feedback and use by schools

Year 2 and Year 3 - same as above with revision and updating of materials as required

Board Information Package: This Information Package (as described in General Public section) will be made available to newcomers and real estate agencies. After a prototype package is assembled, these agencies will have the opportunity to order packages as required.

Timeframe:

Year 1 - development of Information Package materials

- distribution of sample package to agencies
- distribution of packages as required

Year 2 and 3 -updating of materials

- distribution, same as above

Media

Goals:

- to support the media in accessing information on our school system.
- to improve print and electronic media coverage of education issues, staff and student achievements, programs, new education initiatives.

Programs:

Media Releases: As described in the General Public section of this Plan, increased emphasis will be placed on media releases that highlight staff and student achievements; as well as Board initiatives; management of fiscal resources; and results of program evaluation.

The Public Relations Officer will also focus on the development of story ideas for electronic media, such as: localized angles on education issues and trends; outstanding student and staff achievements; and Board initiatives.

Timeframe:

Year 1 - development of revised media release format

- updating and revision of media lists

- development and circulation of releases

Year 2 and 3 - same as above

Media Relations: The Public Relations Officer will continue to develop a strong liaison with media, responding to enquiries in a prompt manner, providing access to Board spokespeople on specific issues, and assisting media in the collection of data, as appropriate. It is expected that media relations will be addressed as part of the Public Relations Policy.

Other

Mailing Lists: As part of all publication programs, Public Relations Department mailing lists will be updated to include addresses for key internal and external audiences.

Timeframe:

Year 1 - development of lists

Year 2 and 3 - updating and revision as required

Graphic Standards: The Public Relations Officer will develop standard design parameters for a number of Board communication materials. These standards will increase visual communication effectiveness and readability in all Board publications. Standard graphic design elements will also improve audience identification of Hamilton Board materials.

Timeframe:

Year 0 - development of design parameters

Year 1 to 3 - implementation of design parameters on Board publications

- on-going revision based on feedback.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY -- PROGRAMS 1994-1997

Parent Fact Sheets
Information Resources Listing
Hamilton Board Information Package
Information Line
Elementary/Secondary Calendar
Parent Conference
Public Service Announcements
Parent Communication Audit
Staff Workshops
Parent Communication Strategies Review
Recognition Program
From the Director
Quickfinder
PROFS/Communication Channel Standardization
Newslines
Director's Annual Report (and Special Business Supplement)
Education Week
Media Releases
Budget Communications
Speeches Program/Input Sessions
Communication Needs Review (ELS Groups)
Media Relations
Mailing Lists
Graphic Standards

RECOMMENDATIONS TO BOARD

The following recommendations were approved by the Board of Education for the City of Hamilton at the Regular Board Meeting on November 18, 1993:

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- (i) That the 1994-1997 Public Relations Plan be accepted and that the Public Relations Officer report to the Operations and Finance Committee, annually, in November.
- (ii) That the Public Relations Plan be communicated to staff and external audiences.
- (iii) That a Public Relations Policy be developed and presented at the June meeting of the Operations and Finance Committee.
- (iv) That the Public Relations Policy formalize the Board's commitment to:
 - * trust and openness in communication with internal and external publics;
 - * and the development, review and evaluation of effective and systematic two-way communication programs at the school and system levels.

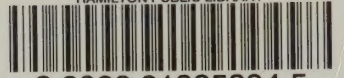
RATIONALE:

It is important that internal and external publics are aware of new directions in public relations programs included in the 1994-1997 Public Relations Plan. Staff and key external publics will benefit from improved communication programs.

The development of a planned and systematic two-way communication process will support the Board in its mission to educate children and adults by:

- * building stronger links between schools, parents, staff, and the community;
- * encouraging parent involvement in the education process, thereby supporting student achievement;
- * increasing support and recognition of staff accomplishments to encourage teamwork, innovation and educational excellence;
- * closing the gap between parent and public school experience and education today;
- * increasing student and staff pride in educational endeavours;
- * increasing public understanding of Board programs; available resources and services; objectives; and accomplishments of students and staff;
- * developing effective and cost-efficient public relations/communication channels.

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